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p.174

Tales of Yudhishtira

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RETOLD FROM THE MAHABHARATA

Yudhishtira, the eldest of the five Pandava princes, was born to Kunti by the grace of Yama. His actions were free from passion and prejudice. He came to be considered the very embodiment of Dharma and was respectfully referred to as Dharmareja.

Yama, the awe-inspiring God of death, is also revered as the Lord of Justice. According to Hindu belief, all living beings reap the fruit of their actions after death. Yama administers justice to all the beings brought before him. Since he metes out justice strictly according to *Dharma*, he is called Yamadharma. Who else could test Yudhishtira but Yamadharma? Yudhishtira emerged from the ordeals a stronger soul.



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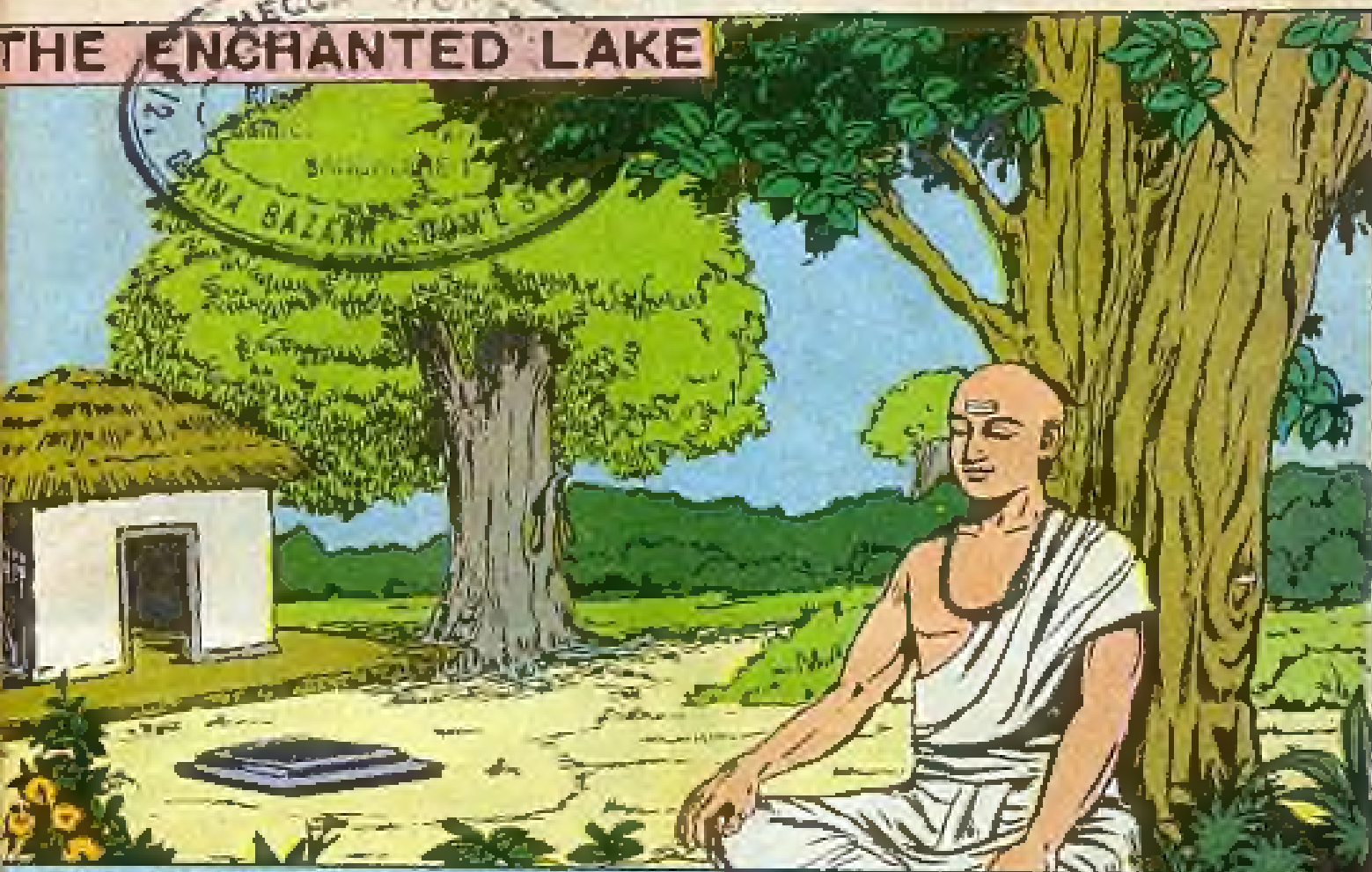
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THE ENCHANTED LAKE



IN THE FOREST OF DWAITAVANA, THERE LIVED A PIOUS BRAHMAN. HIS MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION WAS A PAIR OF SHAMI* STICKS, WHICH SET OFF SPARKS WHEN RUBBED AGAINST EACH OTHER.

HE USED THESE STICKS TO LIGHT THE FIRE...



...FOR HIS YAGNAS.



SHAMI* WOOD WAS USED FOR KINDLING THE YAGNA OR SACRIFICIAL FIRE.

WHEN THE STICKS WERE NOT IN USE,
HE WOULD HANG THEM ON A TREE,
ONE DAY WHEN HE WAS AWAY...



...A DEER CAME UP TO THE TREE AND
PLAYFULLY BUTTED THE STICKS...



...AND THEY GOT ENTANGLED IN
ITS ANTLERS.

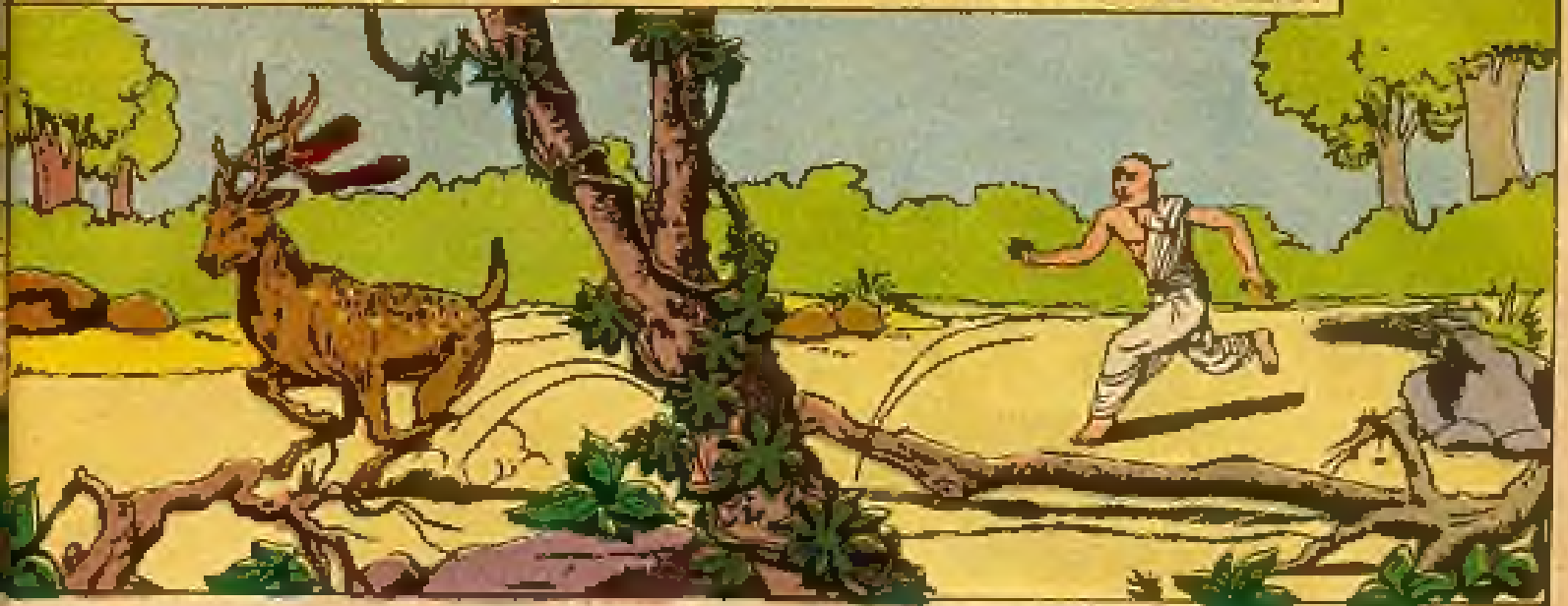


LATER, WHEN THE BRAHMAN
RETURNED TO HIS COTTAGE —

MY
STICKS!



HE DROPPED THE BUNDLE OF DRY TWIGS AND RAN AFTER THE DEER.



BUT THE BRAHMAN, WHO WAS NO MATCH FOR THE SWIFT ANIMAL, SOON HAD TO GIVE UP THE CHASE.



AS HE TURNED TO GO BACK TO HIS HERMITAGE, A THOUGHT SUDDENLY STRUCK HIM.



THE PANDAVA PRINCES, WHO HAD LOST THEIR KINGDOM TO THEIR WILY COUSINS, WERE NOW LIVING IN EXILE WITH THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI.



WHEN THE BRAHMAN STOOD BEFORE THEM, YUDHISHTHIRA, THE ELDEST PANDAVA, WAS THE FIRST TO SPEAK.

WELCOME TO OUR HERMITAGE! IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU?

O KING, ONLY YOU CAN SAVE ME!



THE BRAHMAN THEN TOLD HIM OF THE LOSS OF HIS STICKS.

WITHOUT MY STICKS, I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PERFORM MY RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

WE WILL TRACK DOWN THE DEER AND BRING BACK THE STICKS TO YOU.



THE PANDAVAS SET OUT. FOR A WHILE THEY HAD NO LUCK. THEN SUDDENLY—

DEER TRACKS! LET US FOLLOW THEM.

AT LAST, FAR, FAR AWAY FROM THEIR HERMITAGE—

LOOK! THE DEER!



THE PANDAVAS CHASED THE DEER AND SHOT AT IT, BUT IN VAIN.



FOR, SUDDENLY—

IT HAS
VANISHED!

WHAT SHALL
WE DO NOW?



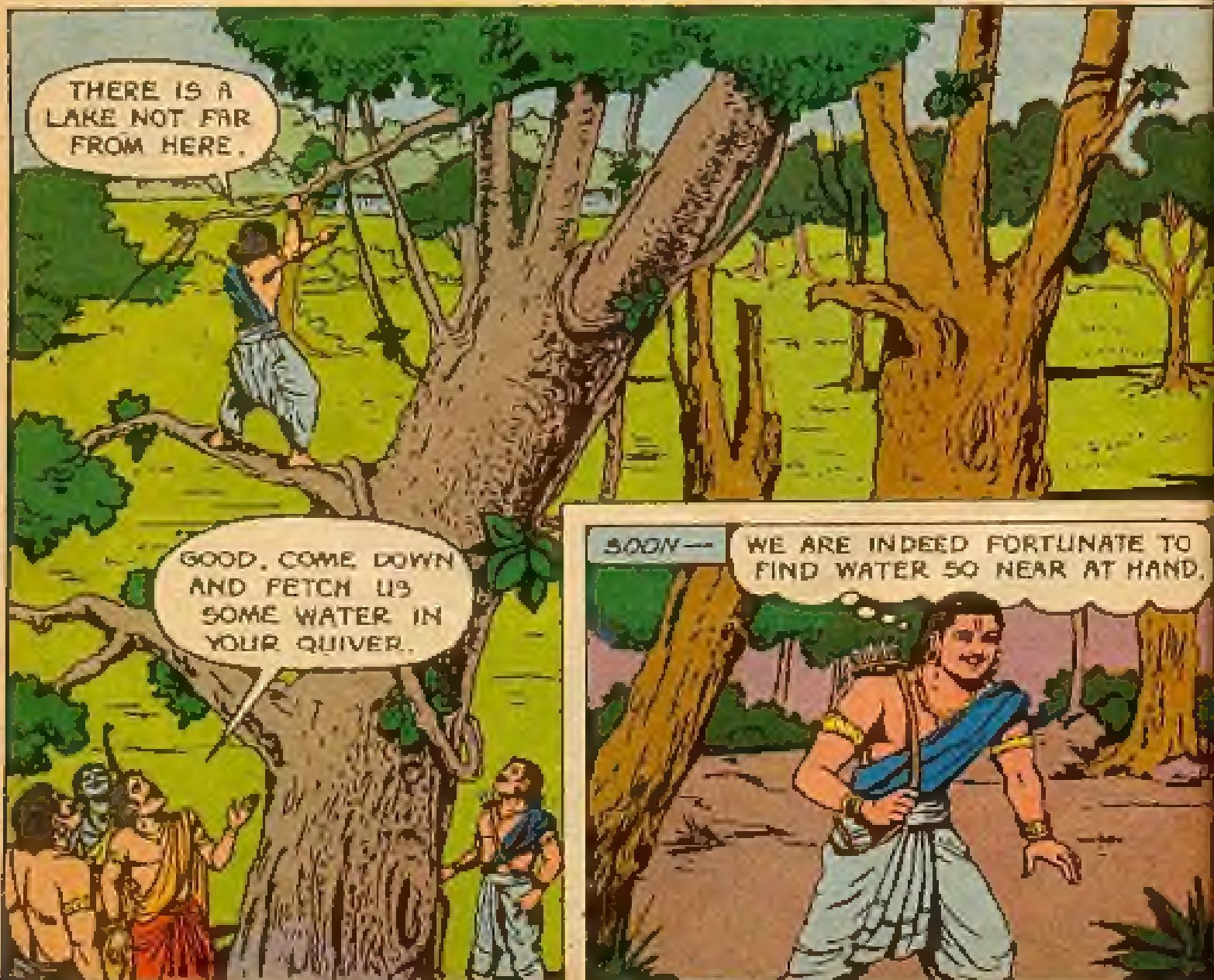
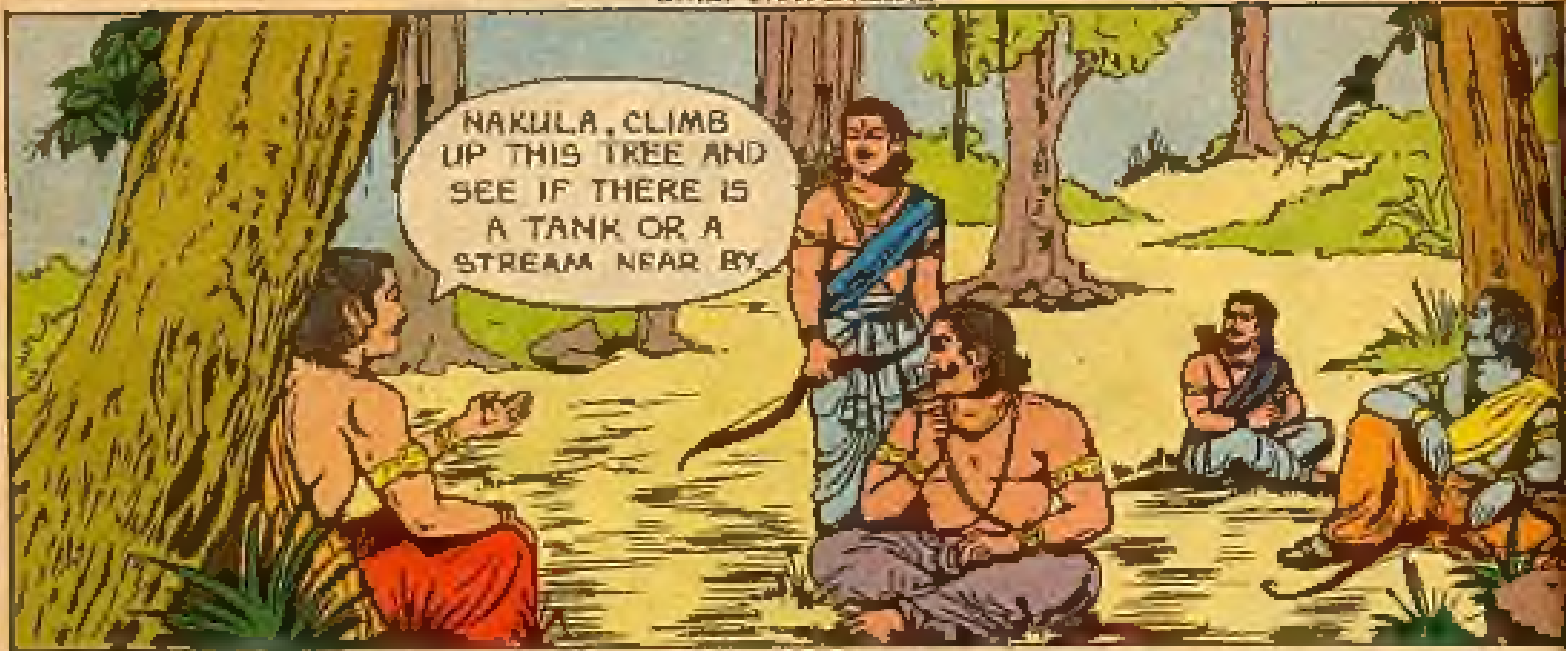
WE MUST
FIND IT
AGAIN. LET
US CONTINUE
THE HUNT.



I AM TIRED,
HUNGRY AND
THIRSTY.

THEN LET US
REST BEFORE
WE GO ON.





HE RUSHED TO THE LAKE.

WAIT! THIS LAKE BELONGS TO ME. YOU MAY DRINK FROM IT ONLY AFTER YOU ANSWER MY QUESTIONS.

NARULA LOOKED AROUND. THERE WAS NO ONE IN SIGHT.

WHO COULD IT BE?

I'LL FIND OUT AFTER I HAVE...

...QUENCHED MY THIRST.

THE NEXT MOMENT HE FELL DEAD.

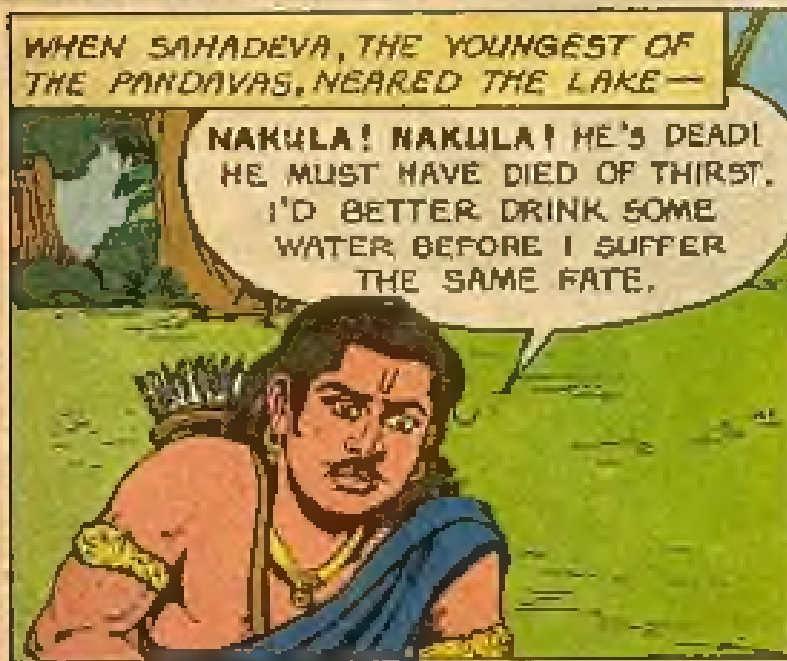
MEANWHILE THE OTHER PANDAVAS BECAME IMPATIENT.

WHY HASN'T NAKULA RETURNED YET? GO, SAHADEVA, AND SEE IF YOU CAN DO BETTER.



WHEN SAHADEVA, THE YOUNGEST OF THE PANDAVAS, NEARED THE LAKE—

NAKULA! NAKULA! HE'S DEAD! HE MUST HAVE DIED OF THIRST. I'D BETTER DRINK SOME WATER BEFORE I SUFFER THE SAME FATE.



I OWN THIS LAKE. IF YOU DRINK WITHOUT FIRST ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS, YOU TOO WILL FALL DEAD.



BUT SAHADEVA HARDLY HEARD HIM.



AND HE TOO FELL DEAD.



THEN CAME ARJUNA, THE THIRD OF THE PANDAVAS HE CAME IN SEARCH OF HIS BROTHERS

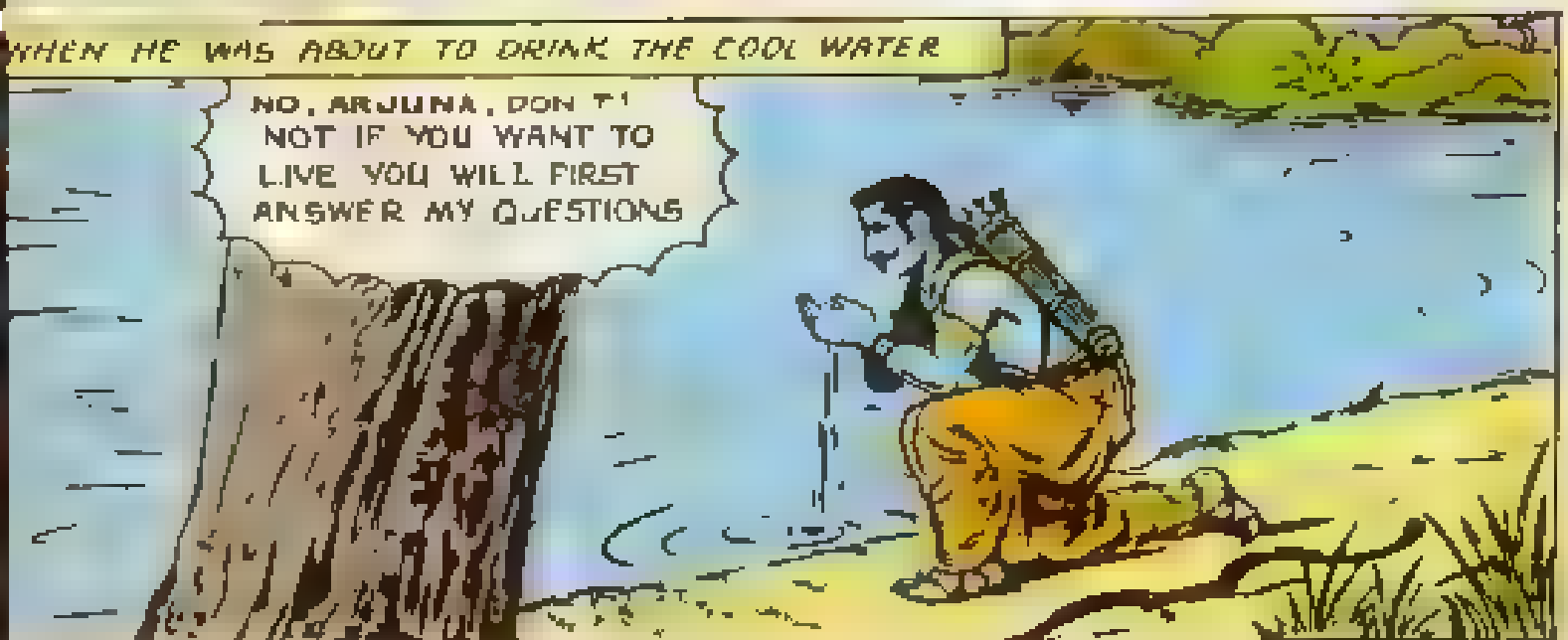
NAKULA! SANJAY! HOW WHO HAS DONE THIS VILE DEED? WHOEVER IT IS, HE HAS INVITED HIS OWN DEATH

ARJUNA RAISED HIS BOW AND LOOKED AROUND

THERE IS NO ONE IN SIGHT BEFORE I GO IN SEARCH OF THE MURDERER, I'D BETTER QUENCH MY THIRST.

WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO DRINK THE COOL WATER

NO, ARJUNA, DON'T! NOT IF YOU WANT TO LIVE YOU WILL FIRST ANSWER MY QUESTIONS



ARJUNA WAS ENRAGED.

WILL I BE COWARD,
APPEAR BEFORE ME,
IF YOU DARE, AND
THEN LAY YOUR
CONDITIONS.



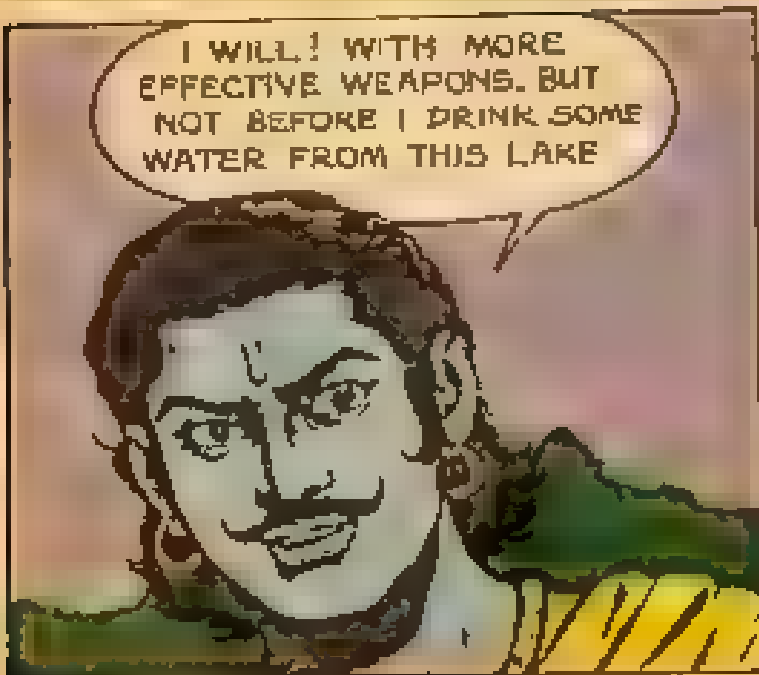
WHEN HIS TAUNT DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE
ANY EFFECT, ARJUNA RAISED HIS BOW AND
SHOT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE VOICE



YOUR ARROWS CANNOT
HARM ME, ARJUNA!
WHY DON'T YOU
ANSWER MY
QUESTIONS?



I WILL! WITH MORE
EFFECTIVE WEAPONS. BUT
NOT BEFORE I DRINK SOME
WATER FROM THIS LAKE



ARJUNA TOO DISREGARDED THE WARNING



AND PAID THE PENALTY



THEN CAME BHIMA, THE SECOND PANDAVA WHEN HE SAW HIS BROTHERS LYING DEAD NEAR THE LAKE



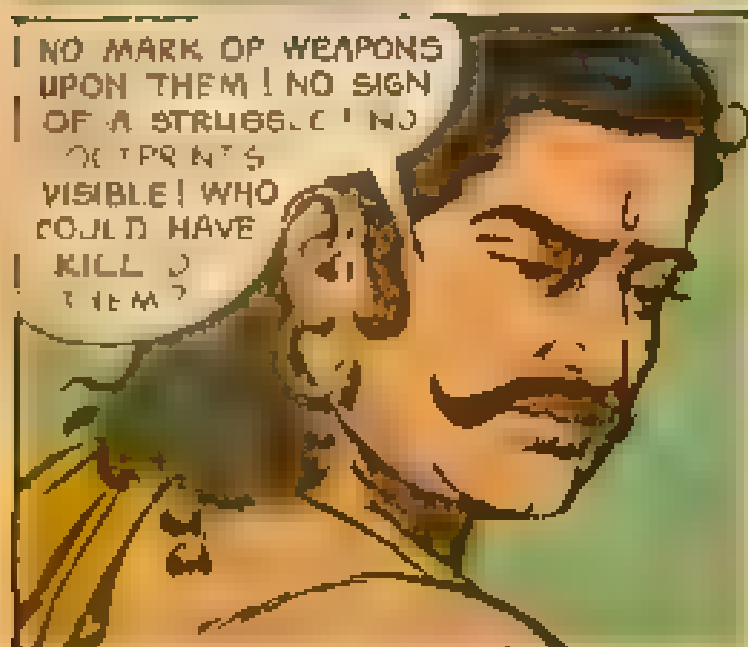
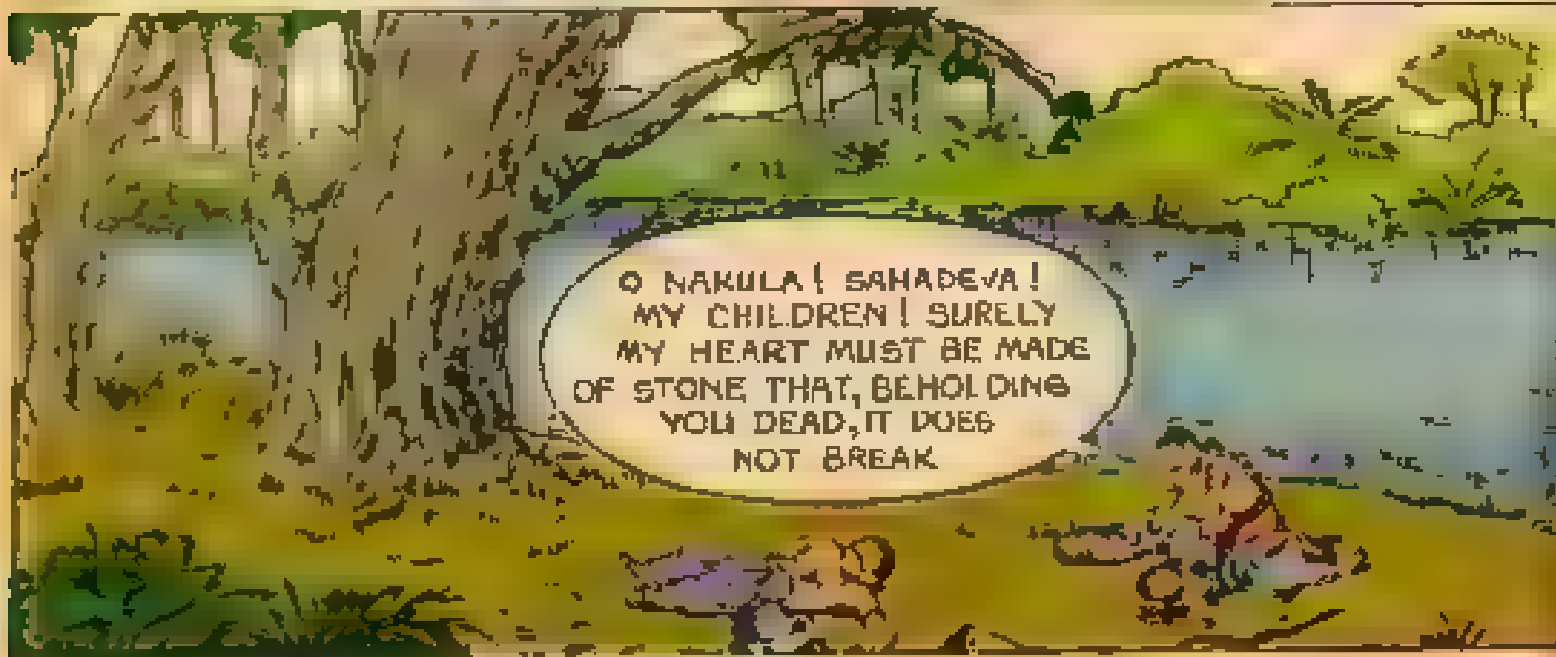
I'LL MUST BE THE ALI OF A YAKSHA* OR A RAKSHASA†. A BATTLE AWAITS ME LET ME QUENCH MY THIRST AND PREPARE MYSELF FOR IT

BHIMA TOO DRANK THE WATER DISREGARDING THE WARNING OF THE INVISIBLE ONE, AND FELL DEAD

AT LAST YUDHISHTHIRA HIMSELF CAME HE WAS STUNNED BY THE SIGHT THAT MET HIS EYES



DEAR, DEAR, BROTHERS! ARE YOU REALLY DEAD OR ARE MY EYES PLAYING TRICKS ON ME!



A VOICE STOPPED HIM

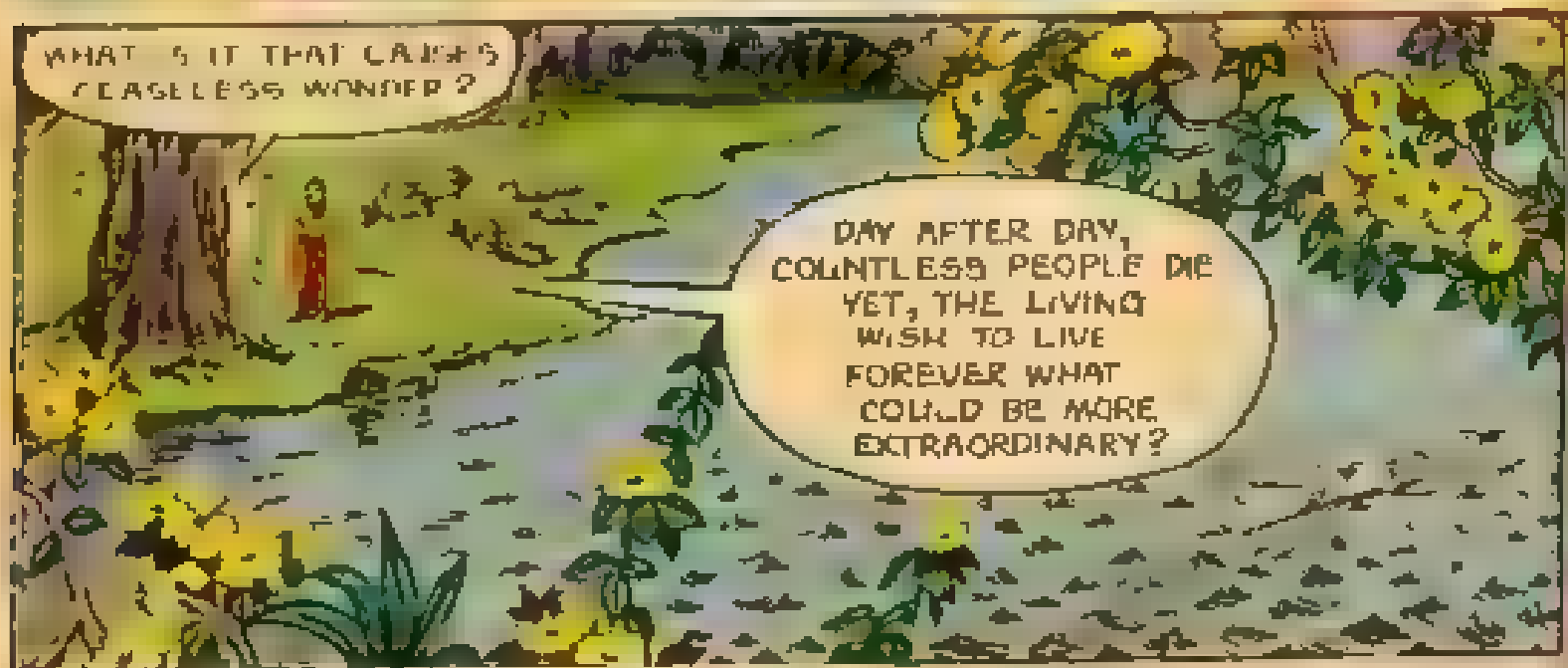
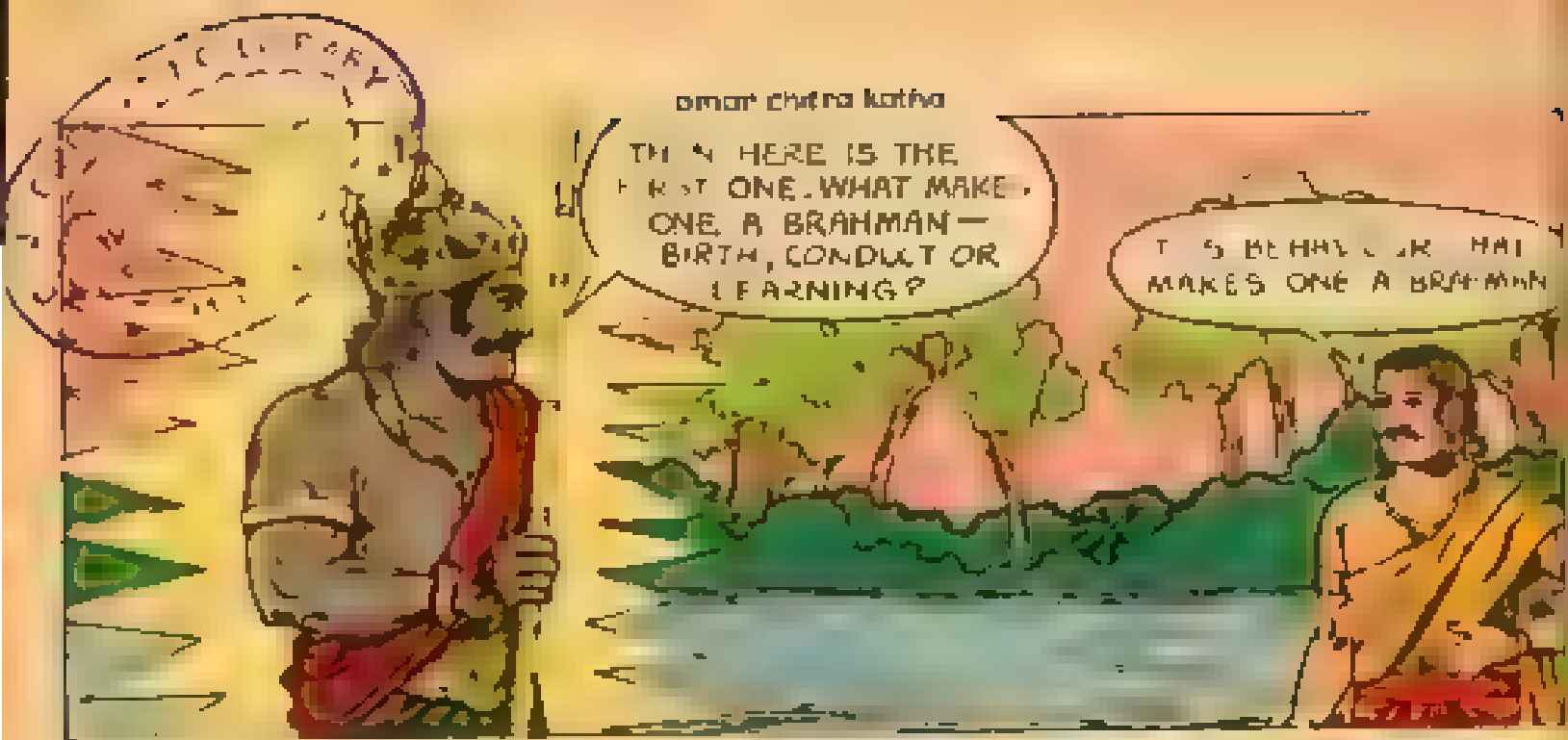
I AM THE CRANE WHO
OWNS THIS LAKE. IF YOU
DRINK WITHOUT FIRST
ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS
YOU, TOO, WILL DIE
LIKE YOUR RASH
BROTHERS

YOU, WHO HAVE KILLED
THOSE WHO COULD NOT
BE OVERCOME EITHER BY
THE DEVAS OR THE ASURAS,
CANNOT BE AN ORDINARY
BIRD. TELL ME WHO
YOU REALLY ARE

THE NEXT MOMENT -

I AM A YAKSHA
IF YOU ANSWER MY
QUESTIONS, YOU MAY
DRINK AT MY LAKE

O YAKSHA, ASK
YOUR QUESTIONS
I SHALL TRY TO
ANSWER THEM



AT LAST —

YOUR ANSWERS PLEASE
ME, ONE OF YOUR BROTHERS
CAN NOW COME BACK
TO LIFE. WHICH ONE
DO YOU WANT?

NAKULA, MY
LORD

THE YAKSHA WAS SURPRISED

WHY NAKULA? WHY
NOT MIGHTY BHIMA OR
VALIANT ARJUNA? ONE OF
THEM WOULD BE MORE
USEFUL TO YOU WHEN
YOU TRY TO REGAIN
YOUR KINGDOM!

BESIDES, BHIMA AND ARJUNA
ARE YOUR OWN BROTHERS.
NAKULA IS ONLY YOUR
STEP-BROTHER. WHY DO
YOU CHOOSE HIM?

MY FATHER HAD TWO
WIVES — KUNTI AND
MADRI. I, A SON OF
KUNTI, AM ALIVE. LET
A SON OF MADRI TOO
LIVE. LORD, LET
NAKULA COME
TO LIFE

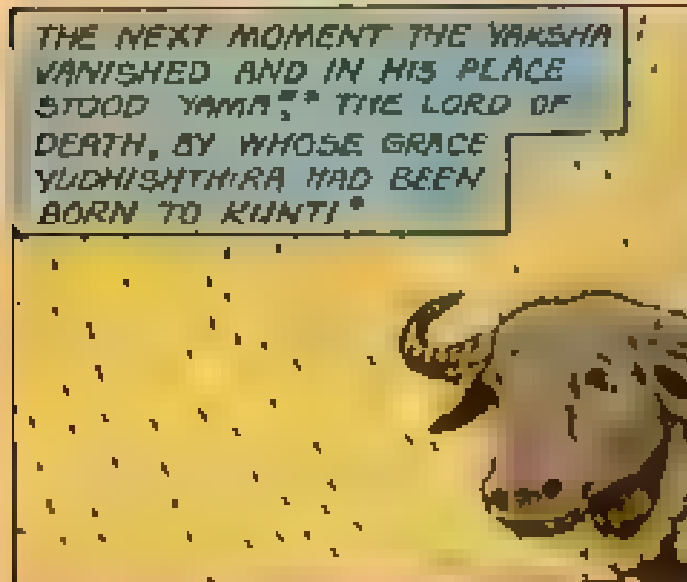


AM PLEASED
WITH YOUR
RIGHTEDNESS.
ALL YOUR BROTHERS
SHALL COME TO
LIFE



AND LO! THEY DID!

MY LORD, YOU CANNOT
BE A YAKSHA YOU MUST
BE A DEVA.* PLEASE
REVEAL YOURSELF



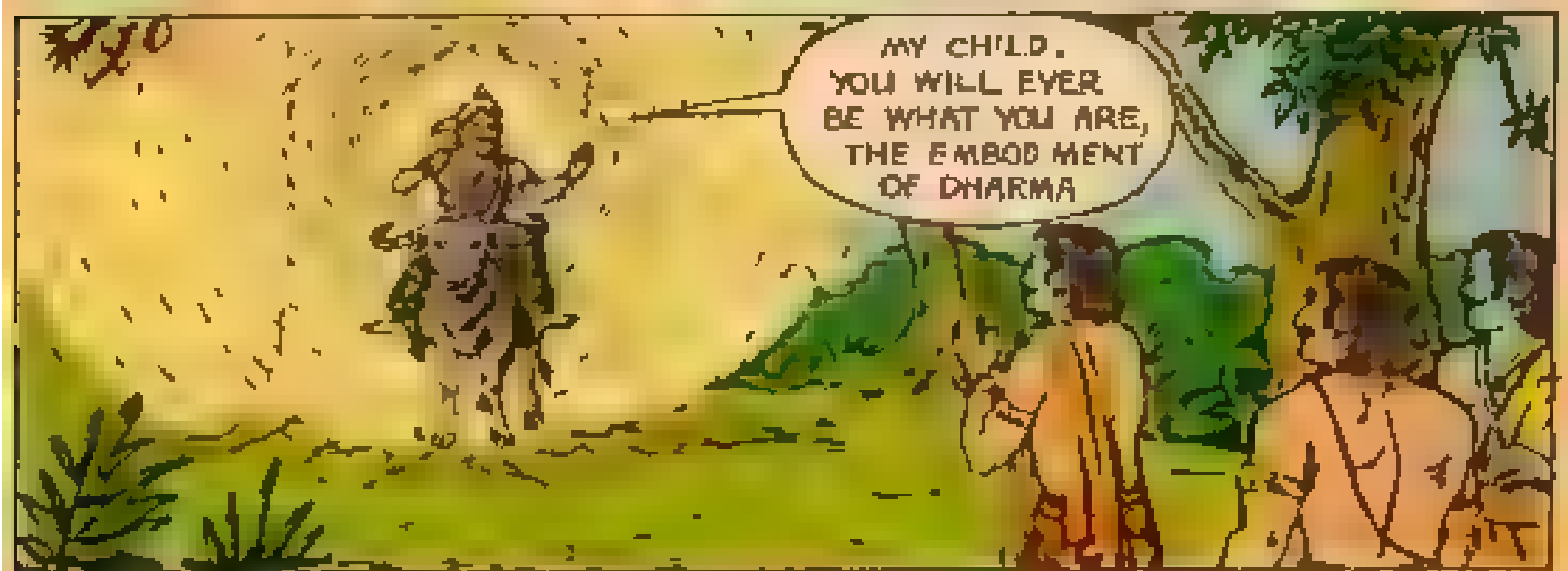
THE NEXT MOMENT THE YAKSHA
VANISHED AND IN HIS PLACE
STOOD YAMA,** THE LORD OF
DEATH, BY WHOSE GRACE
YUDHISHTHIRA HAD BEEN
BORN TO KUNTI*

I AM YAMA.
I WANTED TO
TEST YOU, SO, IN THE
FORM OF A DEER,
I TOOK AWAY THE
BRAHMAN'S STICKS
TO DRAW YOU TO
THIS SPOT



YAMA THEN GAVE YUDHISHTHIRA
THE STICKS

YOU WILL COMPLETE THE
REMAINING YEAR OF YOUR
EXILE SUCCESSFULLY
YOU MAY NOW ASK FOR
ANOTHER BOON.



AND YAMA VANISHED. THE PANDAVAS RETURNED THE STICKS TO THE BRAHMAN

THE LAST COMPANION



WHEN THE THIRTEEN YEARS OF ENER WERE OVER, YUDHISHTHIRA TAUGHT A
A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WITH THE KADWAVAS BUT DURYODHANA REPLIED
WITH A CRY FOR WAR MANY WERE THE BRAVE WARRIORS THAT WERE
SLAIN ON EITHER SIDE BEFORE THE PANDAVAS FINALLY WON THE WAR

IN SPITE OF THE VICTORY, YUDHISHTHIRA
WAS SAD



THE ANXIOUS SOUNDS
BUT AT WHAT COST! ALMOST
ALL OUR DEAR KINSMEN
ARE GONE! I SHALL
RENOUNCE THE WIN
AND BECOME AN
ASCETIC



THE COURT ELDERS, HOWEVER
PERWADED YUDHISHTHIRA THAT
HE HAD ONLY FULFILLED HIS
DUTY SO HE FINALLY AGREED
TO ASCEND THE THRONE NEED
LESS TO SAY, HE MADE A
PERFECT KING



OUR KING IS JUST,
GENEROUS AND
COMPASSIONATE

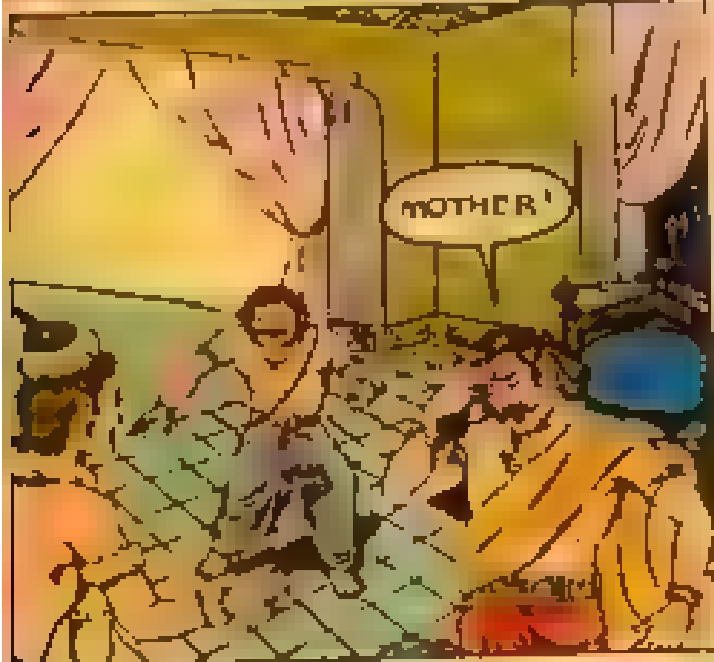
MAY GOD
BLESS HIM!



SEVERAL YEARS WENT BY THEN ONE DAY, SAGE NARADA CALLED ON YUDHISHTHIRA —

HOLY ONE, IN THE COURSE OF YOUR WANDERINGS IN THE FOREST, DID YOU COME ACROSS MY MOTHER, KUNTI, AND MY UNCLE AND HIS WIFE P

I DID, O KING, I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU THEY DIED IN A FOREST FIRE



YUDHISHTHIRA HAD HARDLY RECOVERED FROM HIS BRIEF WHEN A MESSENGER ARRIVED FROM DWARAKA

MY LORD, THE YADAVAS ARE ALL DEAD! THEY KILLED ONE ANOTHER IN A DRUNKEN BRAWL! AND LORD KRISHNA, TOO, HAS LEFT THIS WORLD

KRISHNA GONE!

NO!

I FEEL THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO LEAVE THIS EARTH AND SEEK HEAVEN

WE FEEL THE SAME.

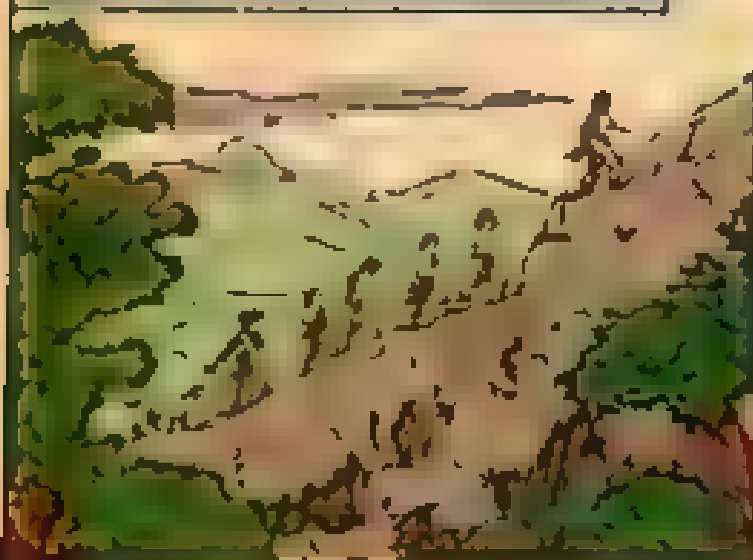
SO YUDHISHTHIRA INSTALLED
PARIKSHIT, THE
SON OF ABHIMANYU
ON THE THRONE...



AND LED DRAUPADI AND HIS BROTHERS OUT OF MATSYPURAM AS THE CITIZENS
STOOD OUTSIDE THE CITY, WATCHING THEIR BELOVED KING AND THE BRAVE
DRAUPADI IN WHAT A STRAY (X) APPEARED ON THE SCENE



IT FOLLOWED THE LITTLE GROUP
ON THE R TREK TO HEAVEN



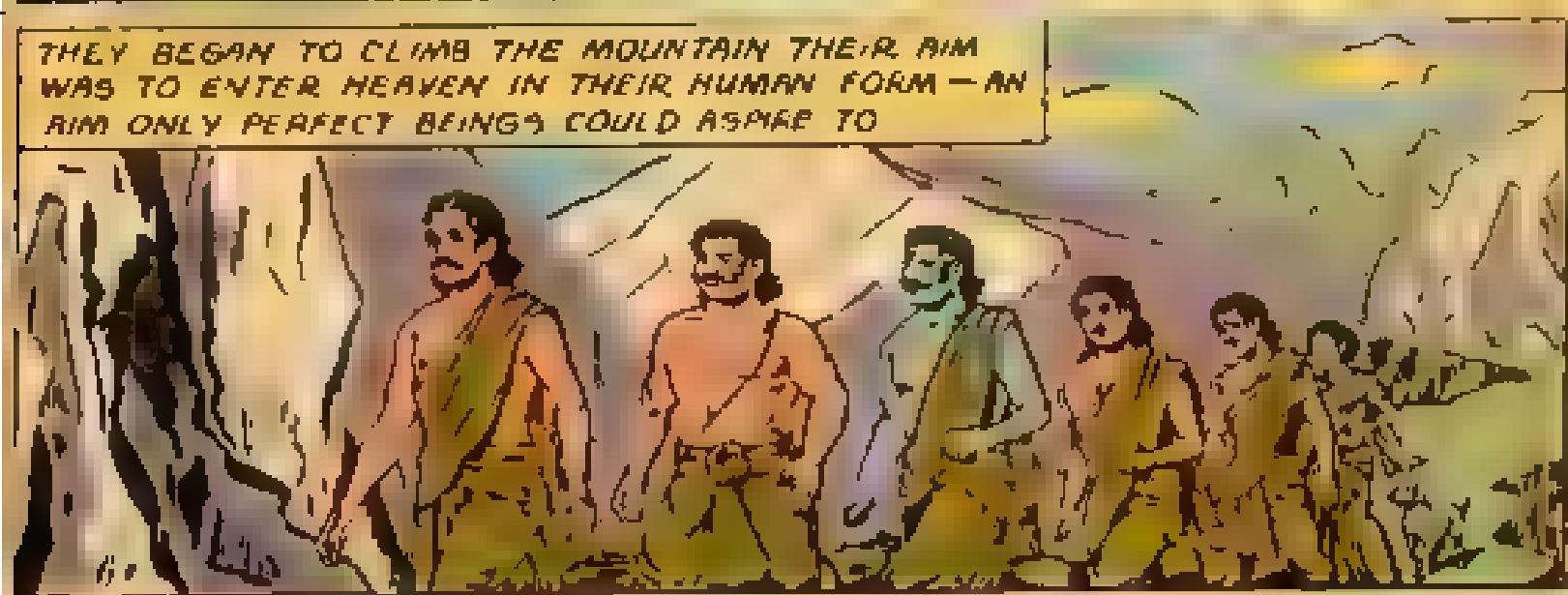
HAVING CROSSED MOUNT MINAVAT, THEY
WALKED THROUGH THE GREAT DESERT
BEYOND IT..



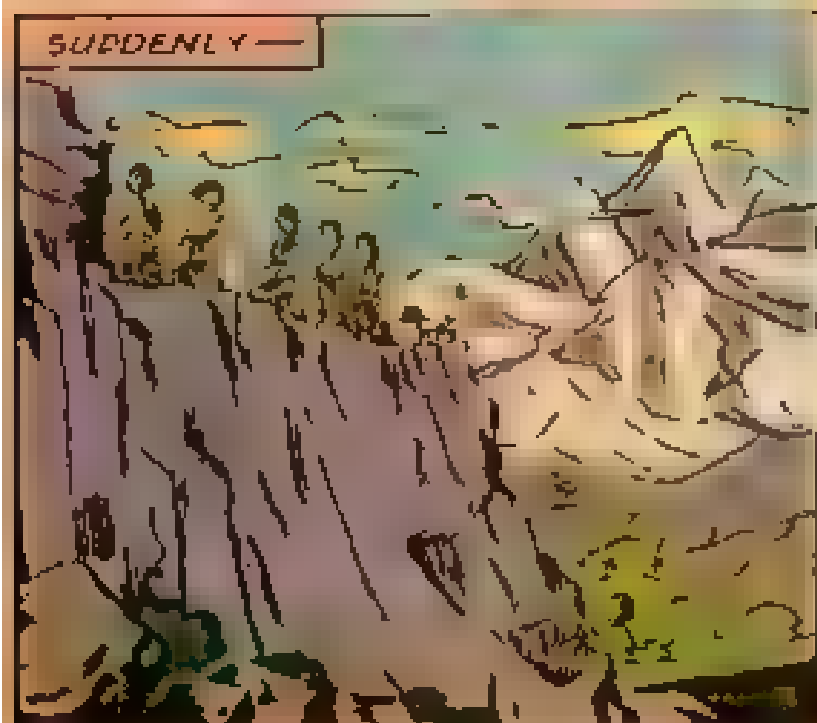
TILL THEY REACHED THE FOOT OF MOUNT MERU



THEY BEGAN TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN THEIR AIM WAS TO ENTER HEAVEN IN THEIR HUMAN FORM — AN AIM ONLY PERFECT BEINGS COULD ASPIRE TO



SUDDENLY —



BHIMA WAS SHOOKED

O KING, WHY HAS DRAUPADI, THE SINLESS, FALLEN?



YODHISTHIRA APPROACHED WITHOUT TURNING BACK.

SHE WAS PARTIAL TO ARJUNA.



SANJAYEVA WAS THE NEXT TO FALL.

HE LACKED CUNNING.



WHEN KARUNAKA FELL, WIFE SANJAYEVA -



HE WAS TOO PROUD OF HIS HANDSOME FEATURES.

AS YODHISTHIRA MOVED ON, FOLLOWED BY BHISHMA AND ARJUNA, THE LITTLE DOG CONTINUED TO KEEP THEM COMPANY.



AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE.

ARJUNA!

HIS VALOUR MADE HIM VAIN.



SUDDENLY BHISHMA CRIED OUT

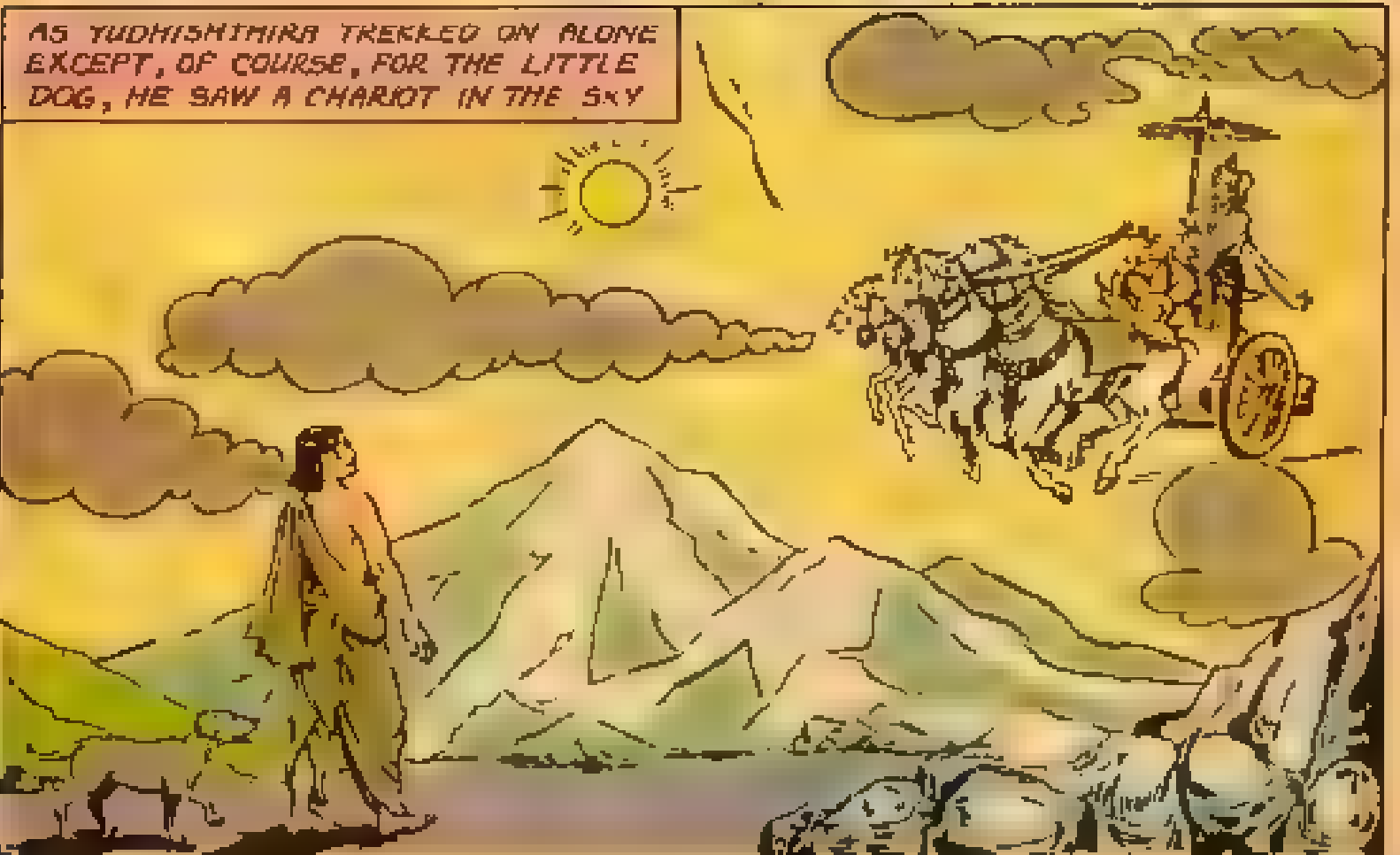
WAIT! I, YOUR
DARLING, AM
FALLING WHERE
DID I FAIL?



YOU WERE GREEDY,
YOU ATE
IMMODERATELY



AS YUDHISHTHIRA TREKKED ON ALONE
EXCEPT, OF COURSE, FOR THE LITTLE
DOG, HE SAW A CHARIOT IN THE SKY



THE NEXT MOMENT INDRA, THE LORD OF HEAVEN, STOOD BEFORE HIM.



INDRA SMILED.

THEY HAVE ALREADY REACHED HEAVEN, BUT NOT IN THEIR HUMAN FORMS. ASCEND THE CHARIOT.

THIS DOG, TOO, WILL GO WITH ME



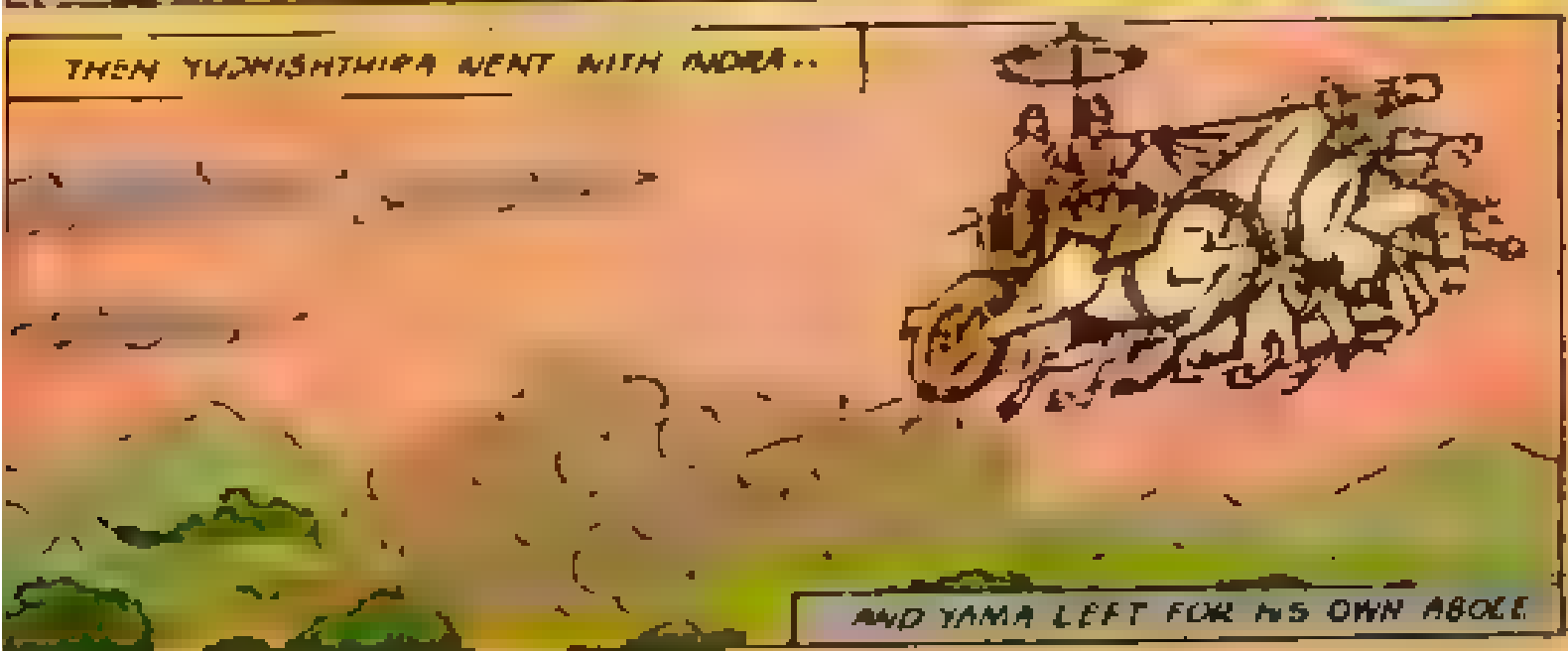
NO! NO! THERE IS NO PLACE IN HEAVEN FOR A DOG

NO PLACE FOR THIS FAITHFUL DOG? THEN TOO HAVE NO PLACE THERE.

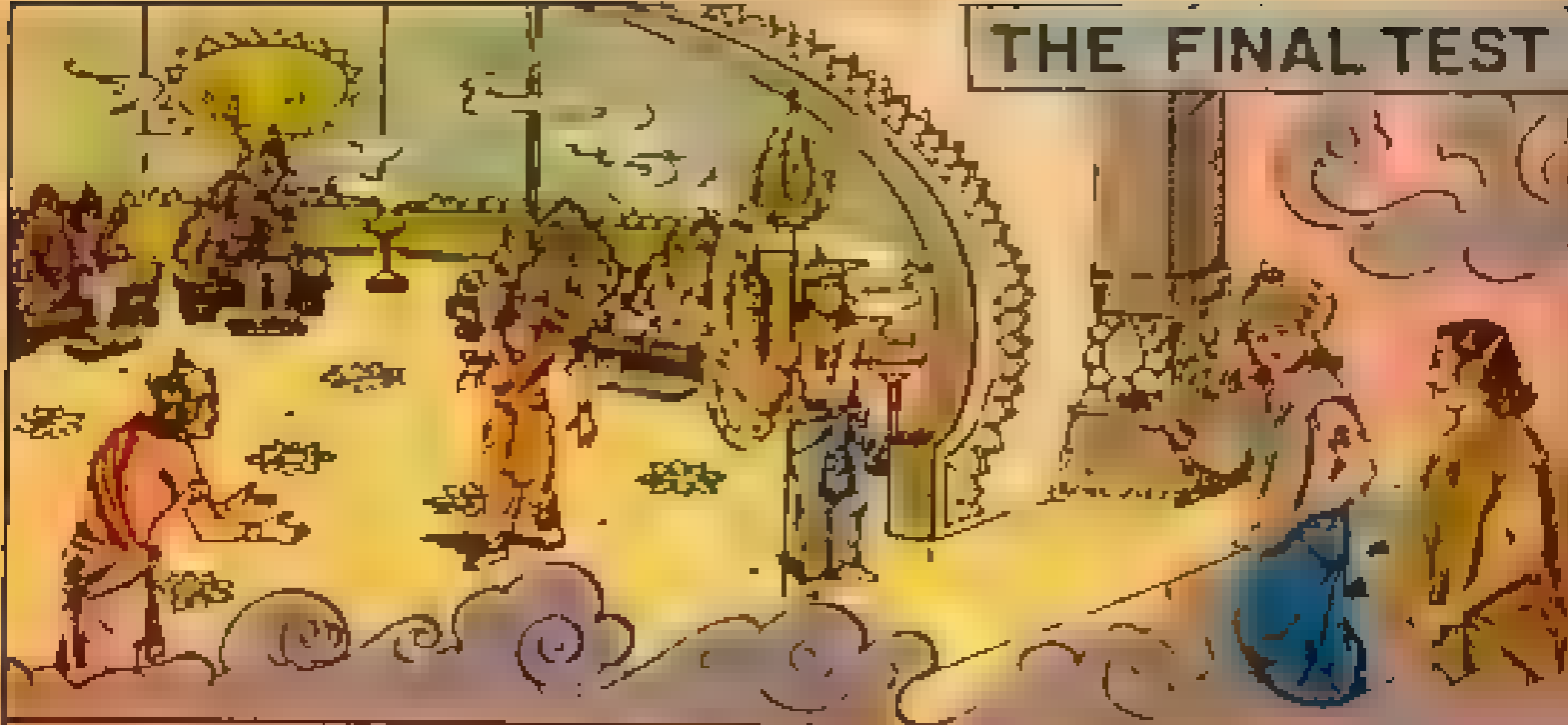
WILL YOU LOSE HEAVEN FOR THE SAKE OF AN ANIMAL? FORSAKE THE DOG.

I CANNOT ABANDON HIM. HE HAS FOLLOWED ME DEVOTEDLY





THE FINAL TEST



WHEN VIDHIYANTHIRA ENTERED HEAVEN, HE WAS RECEIVED BY THE GODS AND THE SAGES HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE DURYODHANA THERE

THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! DURYODHANA, HERE! DURYODHANA, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WAR FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF MEN AND MORALITY! I WILL NOT STAY HERE



NARADA STEPPED FORWARD AND TRIED TO PACIFY HIM.

THIS IS HEAVEN THERE CAN BE NO I WILL HERE DURYODHANA'S HEROIC DEATH ON THE BATTLEFIELD HAS WON HIM A PLACE IN HEAVEN



IF HEAVEN IS THE REWARD
FOR THE UNRIGHTEOUS
DURYODHANA, I WOULD
LIKE TO KNOW WHAT
HIGHER WORLD HAS BEEN
ATTAINED BY MY
RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS!



HE LOOKED AROUND

WHERE ARE MY
BROTHERS? AND
DRAUPADI? WHERE
IS KARNA? TAKE
ME TO MY
BROTHERS.



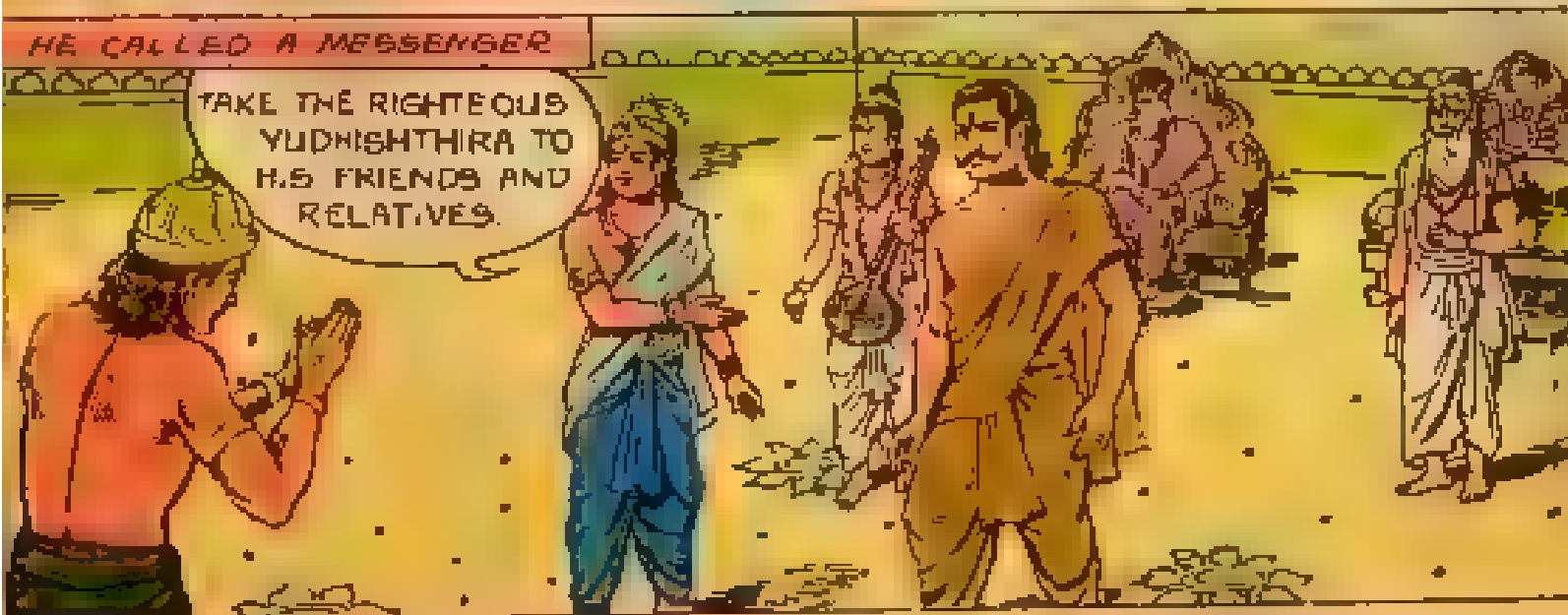
INDRA TURNED TO
YUDHISHTHIRA

NO ONE CAN FORCE
YOU TO STAY HERE
IF YOU DON'T
WANT TO



HE CALLED A MESSENGER

TAKE THE RIGHTEOUS
YUDHISHTHIRA TO
HIS FRIENDS AND
RELATIVES.



YUDHISHTHIRA FOLLOWED THE CELESTIAL MESSENGER. AS THEY WALKED ON, THE GENTLE GLOW OF HEAVEN GRADUALLY FADED...



...AND THEY WERE ENVELOPED IN BLINDING DARKNESS.



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

TO YOUR BROTHERS.

WITH EACH STEP THEY TOOK, THE MORE REVOLTING BECAME THE SCENES THAT MET THEIR EYES.



AS THEY WENT ON, A FOUL STENCH ALMOST SUFFOCATED YUDHISHTHIRA.

WHERE ARE WE? WHERE ARE MY BROTHERS? WHEN WILL WE LEAVE BEHIND THIS UNPLEASANT PATH AND MEET THEM?



THE CELESTIAL MESSENGER STOPPED.

I WAS TOLD TO LEAD
YOU THIS FAR
AND STOP.

IF YOU HAVE HAD
ENOUGH, YOU MAY
RETURN WITH ME.

DISGUSTED BY THE FOUL SMELL, YUDHISHTHIRA
BEGAN TO RETRACE HIS STEPS. SUDDENLY—

WAIT! DON'T
LEAVE US!

YOUR PURE
PRESENCE BRINGS
US COMFORT.

PLEASE
DO NOT GO
BACK.

AS LONG AS
YOU ARE HERE,
WE DO NOT FEEL
THE TORTURES
INFLECTED
UPON US.

WHO ARE
YOU?

I'M BHIMA.

I'M NAKULA.

I'M
SAHADEVA.

I'M
KARNA.

I'M
ARJUNA.

I'M
DRAUPADI.

YUDHISHTHIRA WAS BEWILDERED.

AM I ASLEEP OR
AWAKE? OR HAVE
I GONE MAD?



THEN HE BECAME ANGRY.

DURYODHANA IN
HEAVEN! AND MY
BROTHERS IN HELL!
ARE THE GODS
BLIND? IS
DHARMA DEAD?



I AM NOT GOING WITH YOU.
TELL INDRA THAT I WILL
STAY HERE, AS MY PRESENCE
BRINGS COMFORT TO MY
DEAR ONES.



**THE NEXT MOMENT, YUDHISHTHIRA
WAS BATHED IN DIVINE LIGHT.**



**INDRA AND OTHER DEITIES
APPEARED BEFORE HIM.**

MY CHILD, FOR THE ONE LIE YOU SPOKE TO
HASTEN DRONA'S END, YOU WERE EXPOSED TO
HELL FOR A SECOND. YOUR BROTHERS HAD TO
SUFFER HELL FOR A SHORT DURATION, FOR THE
FAULTS YOU YOURSELF
WERE AWARE OF.
THEY ARE NOW
IN HEAVEN.



THOSE WHOSE MERITS FAR EXCEED THEIR SINS, EXPERIENCE HELL FIRST FOR A SHORT WHILE AND THEN GO TO HEAVEN.



THEN YAMA ADDRESSED YUDHISHTHIRA.

CHILD, THIS WAS YOUR THIRD TEST. YOU WOULD RATHER STAY IN HELL FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR BROTHERS. YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE, RIGHTEOUS AND SINLESS.



YUDHISHTHIRA BOWED TO YAMA.

FATHER, IT WAS YOU WHO GAVE ME STRENGTH TO TREAD THE RIGHTEOUS PATH. I BOW TO YOU.



HE THEN HAD A DIP IN THE CELESTIAL GANGA AND ASSUMED A DIVINE FORM.



HE WAS THEN ESCORTED BY INDRA AND YAMA TO HEAVEN, WHERE HE WAS REUNITED WITH HIS BROTHERS.

